

STRESS-BUSTING STRETCHES

Yoga Stretches For The Office

Although these exercises have been selected because they are generally simple and safe, if you have any medical concerns or if you are pregnant, please consult with your physician before beginning this exercise program.

1. Releasing breath: Stand with your feet about 6 inches apart and your arms hanging loosely by your sides.



Inhale raising your arms overhead, stretching your arms and back.

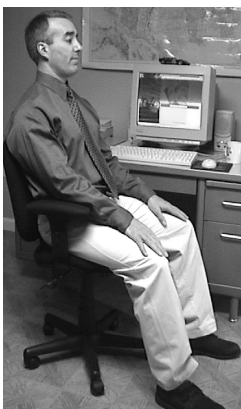
As you exhale, bend forward from the hip with the knees slightly bent. Allow the upper torso and head to hang down.



With the next inbreath, roll up and again raise the arms above the head, stretching upward. Release into the stretch as you exhale, letting go a little more with each outbreath. Continue for 3 – 5 breaths.

Chair Stretches

To begin: Sit comfortably in a chair with both feet on the floor, arms resting lightly on your lap, and your eyes closed or gazing softly downward. Bring your spine as straight as possible with your chest lifted. Release your shoulders down; allow your face to relax, and your jaw to hang loosely.



Breathe: Take a few releasing breaths, inhaling and exhaling through your nose. Focus on the movement of your belly as you breathe – notice the slight **inflation** of the belly on the **inbreath** and the **flattening** back on the **outbreath**. Remember, each outbreath brings an opportunity to let go of any unnecessary tension you may be holding.

Note: Try to breathe in and out through your nose while doing the following exercises. Focus on the breath and the body movements and passively disregard any intrusive thoughts.

2. Leg stretch: Inhale as you bend the left knee, drawing it in toward the chest. Wrap your arms around your left leg as you pull the thigh in toward the chest.



Exhale as you stretch the leg straight.



Repeat 3 - 5 times then switch to the right leg.

3. Spinal flex: Move to the edge of your chair. Rest your hands comfortably on your upper legs near your knees.

As you inhale, stretch your spine up and your chest forward, arching your back slightly.



As you exhale, round your back, rolling your shoulders forward and letting go of tension. Allow your head to move with your body, keeping your chin parallel to the floor.

Repeat 10 times.

4. Cat-cow: Move to the edge of your chair, feet flat on the floor. Reach back and hold on to the back of your chair.



As you inhale, arch your lower back, lift your chest and look up to the ceiling.

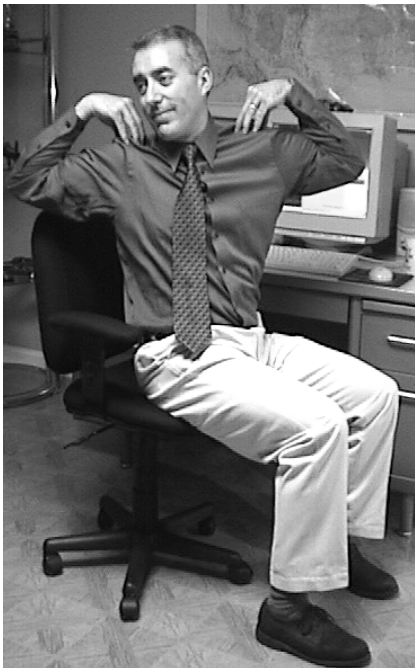
As you exhale, round your back as you bring your chin to your chest and pull in your abdomen.



Repeat 5 times.

5. Side twists: Move to the edge of your chair. Place your hands on your shoulders with fingers in front and thumbs in the back.

Inhale as you twist to the left.

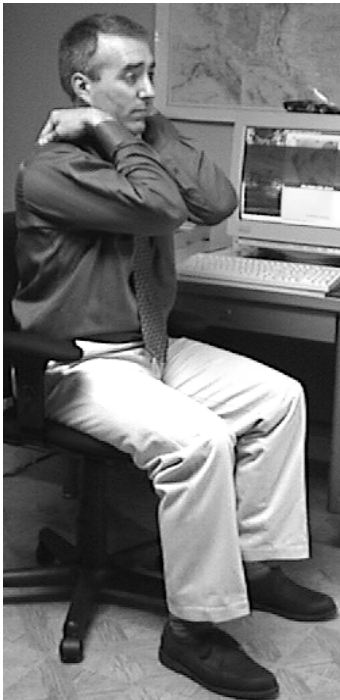
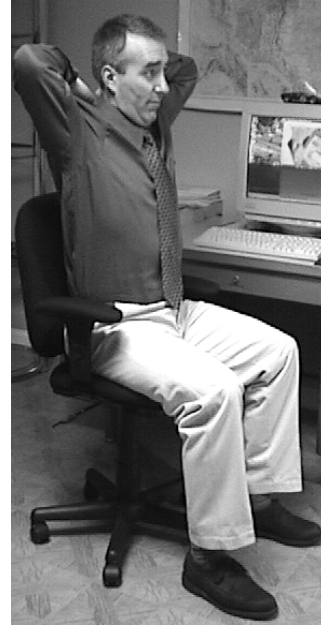


Exhale as you twist to the right. Allow your head to move with your body.

Continue for 5 – 10 breaths. Keep the movement fluid, feeling the expansion of your chest and the stretch in your back.

6. Shoulder rolls: Place your hands on your shoulders, fingers in front and thumbs in the back. Draw large circles with your elbows.

Inhale as the elbows go up and back and the chest expands.

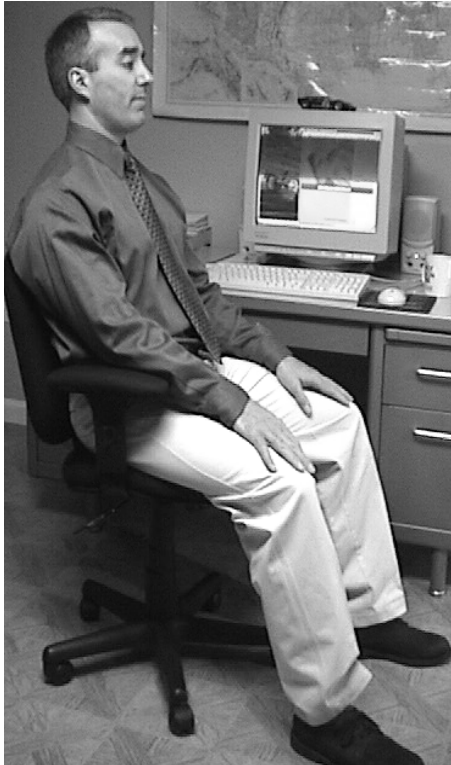


Exhale as the elbows come down and forward.

Focus on the expansion of the chest on the inbreath and the release of shoulder tension on the outbreath.

Draw five circles.

7. Shoulder shrugs: Inhale lifting your shoulders toward your ears until you feel tension in your neck and shoulders.



Exhale forcefully through your nose as you allow your shoulders to drop down.

Repeat for a total of 10 times, letting go of tension as you release the shoulders down.

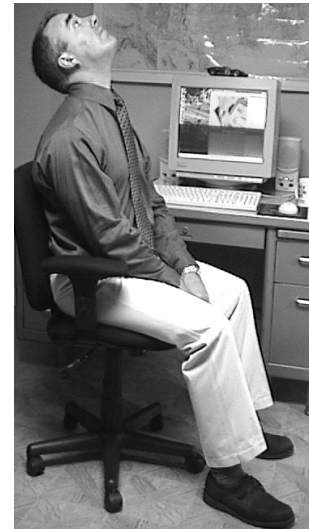
8. Head rolls:

Turn your head to the right, looking over your right shoulder. Exhale as you drop your chin down to your chest and move your head in a clockwise rotation to the left shoulder.



Allow the weight of your head to gently stretch your neck as your head rotates around.

Inhale as your head rotates up and back over to the right shoulder.



Breathe into any tension as you inhale and release and let go as you exhale. Bring your attention to the area of your neck that is experiencing the stretch as your head moves around.

Complete five rolls to the left and then reverse direction.

Sit quietly for a moment and notice any sense of relaxation you may be experiencing.

Standing Stretch

9. Corkscrew: Stand with your feet approximately 4 – 5 inches apart, toes pointing forward and knees soft. Adjust your pelvis so it tips neither forward nor back. Allow your arms to hang loosely by your sides with your chest lifted and shoulders relaxed down.



Inhale and raise your arms up over your head.



Exhale lowering your arms to shoulder level, palms facing the floor. Take a couple of deep breaths in the position. Feel the expansion of your chest and the elongation of your spine on the inbreath and the downward release of your shoulders, pelvis, and feet on the outbreath.

Imagine your arms as the wings of a bottle opener and your head as the cork.



Inhale, and then exhale slowly, pressing your arms down to your sides while your spine and head stretch upward, like a cork popping up.

